195. Broadening the Franchise.

MR. P. MADHAVAN VAIDYAN (*Member, Nominated*) spoke about the need for broadening the franchise in respect of the Legislative Council and the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly. Those two institutions were regarded as the two representative bodies in the State; but strictly speaking, they were not thoroughly popular in as much as the franchise was given only to certain taxpayers who formed but a section of the population. The ideal condition of those institutions could be reached only when universal franchise was given. As it was, he could not understand why the limits of Rs. 50 as land tax in the case of the Assembly and Rs. 5 in the case of the Council were fixed. The principle underlying all representative governments was that every individual should have a right to have his opinion considered. But in a country where the representatives were selected by a certain section of the people alone, the principle had no application. The Government had no doubt recognised the need for representing all interests in the Council and the Assembly, as would be evidenced from the creation of special constituencies for *Jenmies*, *Edavakas* and Planters. But it was regrettable that the labouring class, who outnumbered any other community, had no separate constituency. It might be argued that only those who had vested rights in the State should be given franchise. It was presumably on that principle that payment of tax was prescribed as a necessary qualification for voting. But he could not understand how the minima of Rs. 5 and Rs. 50 were fixed. The limits were quite arbitrary. In his opinion, all who were paying tax, irrespective of its amount, should be eligible to vote. Under the existing rules, franchise was given only to a minority of the taxpayers. That had adversely affected certain communities in the past two general elections. It was therefore necessary to give franchise to all taxpayers; and if that could not be done, the minimum property qualification should be fixed at Re. 1. The revision was rendered all the more necessary because of the changes that had occurred among the taxpayers as a result of the Nayar and the Ezhava Regulations. It was wrong to believe that, as a result of partitions of big Nayar or Ezhava *tarwads*, the number of voters had increased; on the other hand, the number was sure to be reduced at least so far as the Ezhavas were concerned. In the first year of the Ezhava Regulation, *viz.*, 1101, more than 23,700 *tarwads* were partitioned. As a result, many *tarwads* that had at least one vote each lost even that. The member therefore pleaded once again for the reduction of the property qualification for purposes of voting as suggested by him.

196. Reform of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

MR. T. K. PADMANABHA PILLAI (*Member, Trivandrum taluk, Group I*) said that the question of reforming the Assembly had been brought before the Government at successive sessions of the Assembly, but it had not yet received the attention it deserved. Past history would show that the powers and privileges of the Assembly were curtailed from time to time. Originally, any subject could be discussed, but it was no longer the case. Further, a member was allowed to make only two representations, although he was obliged to remain in Trivandrum throughout the session.

Secondly, the members were not allowed to have a joint deliberation on any subject and the officers also had no voice in anything even when their measures and acts were questioned. That was not a happy state of affairs. Voting was the essence of a representative assembly and discussions alone gave an opportunity for exchanging views between the officers and the representatives of the people. At the fifth session of the Assembly, Sir P. Rajagopalachariar said "Travancore has in this Assembly an institution, which, with judicious development might be made most useful for purposes of good Government". If that hope was to be fulfilled, the Assembly Rules required suitable modification.

There was a certain section of the public opinion against the continuance of the Assembly, especially after the inauguration of the Legislative Council. But Mysore set an example in having two similar institutions side by side. The country at large and the members of the Legislative Council in particular had indicated the

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